

PROPOSED SAN DIEGO MAIN LIBRARY ONE FOR THE BOOKS

SUMMARY

A vibrant library system, with a dynamic main library at its core, is the heartbeat of municipal culture (*San Diego Union-Tribune* editorial on April 3, 2005).

The current library was built in 1954 and has aged to the point where it is no longer productive to consider remodeling or refurbishing as options. The infrastructures of plumbing, electrical, computer network wiring, heating and cooling are all in need of constant repair. The vast number of manuscripts, periodicals and other documents has forced nearly 70% to be stored in basement levels and are only ***available by special request***. Clearly, the 144,524 square feet are no longer adequate, especially in this age of technology, where demands are constantly on the rise. Auditorium capacity, numbers of meeting and study rooms are inadequate to satisfy current needs. Library parking is virtually nonexistent at the current location. Finally, the building does not meet earthquake standards. For these and other reasons, San Diego needs a new central library.

Library management and staff, the San Diego Library Foundation and the San Diego Library Commission agrees that building a new main library is an absolute necessity. They also agree the time to do it is now. Work has begun; however, funding remains a gray area. The cost of the project, first estimated at \$145 million, has grown to nearly \$200 million. By 2005 available funding included \$80 million from Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC), \$20 million from a California state library grant, and \$3 million from donations. Now, more than two years later, nearly \$97 million is still needed to complete construction.

There are those who disagree with building a new library. The San Diego County Taxpayers Association questions how a larger, more complex library can be operated when staff and hours are being cut to sustain the current library. Many editorials and letters to the editor of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* consider the project ill-advised. Many regard the proposed structure as unattractive. Others claim it will not be a functional, useful building. Others still believe the expenditure to be frivolous in light of the City of San Diego's current financial condition.

PURPOSE

- To determine if a new main library as currently designed and at the estimated cost is feasible
- To search out possible cost-effective alternatives to solve the existing library's shortcomings

- To review library project initial expenditures for architectural design, working drawings and initial construction
- To determine what remains of the \$80 million provided by CCDC funds

PROCEDURE

Reviews:

- Studied requirements for a new main library
- Compared specifications of existent library with proposed replacement
- Questioned San Diego County Taxpayers Association's reasons for not supporting the building project
- Looked at financial expenditures for architectural design, working drawings and initial construction

Interviews:

- Library management
- Library Commission Foundation
- San Diego County Taxpayers Association
- High-ranking City officials
- Library project representative

Visits:

- San Diego Main library
- San Diego State University Library
- Proposed main library building site

Audit

Auditor's Review of proposed main library pre-construction expenditures is as follows:
Due to time constraints, the audit report is incomplete and unavailable for this report.

DISCUSSION

The question isn't whether San Diego needs a new main library; rather can the City of San Diego afford to build and operate a new one? It appears that many consider the current library inadequate and believe a new one should be built.

At an initial cost of \$1.7 million, the current building has served the city well for more than a half century. The library is 144,524 square feet on a 30,000 square foot lot. It contains three floors and two basement levels. The library shelves 780,000 volumes, provides 84 computers for public use, seats 409 readers, accommodates 185 in the auditorium and has only two meeting rooms. Since the library opened, nearly 35 million materials have been circulated and library staff has answered 30 million reference questions. Excellent maintenance, appropriate updates and dedicated staff have preserved the library in usable condition for all these years. But it is not enough. The current main library is worn out and long past its prime. Another refurbishment, enlargement,

plumbing project or paint job to the existing building will not satisfy current library demands.

In 1954, San Diego's population was 450,000. Now, more than a million people live in the city. Technology has also improved since 1954. Words like computer work station, server, networking and internet were not in common use. To configure the existing building to accommodate several hundred computers using today's technology would require miles of "category six" or fiber optic cable for network and internet service. In addition, data communication facilities would be required to make it work.

Electrical wiring, plumbing and fire prevention systems are all outdated. The existing building is not prepared for an earthquake. Parking is all but nonexistent, display space for books, periodicals and other documents ran out years ago.

Since 1954, 45 independent studies on the main library were conducted. Finally, in 2001, after evaluating six potential downtown sites, the City, with CCDC support, selected the Park-to-Bay site which is a city block surrounded by 11th Avenue, Park Boulevard and J and K Streets. Park-to-Bay is a planned promenade from Balboa Park to the bay where the library would be at a point where the promenade changes direction. This site is close to public transportation, including the trolley and multiple bus routes. It is centrally located in the East Village redevelopment area. In 2002, the City adopted the library system, which included a \$312 million improvement program where the new main library would be the focal point of a network including all satellite city libraries.

San Diego's current financial situation has created a cloud of doom over funding for the proposed new main library. During April of 2005, the City voted to disburse \$6.5 million for architecture and initial construction work. At that time, the estimate to complete the library was \$150 million. It is now approaching \$200 million and confirmed contributions remain at \$3 million. Additional disbursements have been made since 2005 to complete building design with associated working drawings and remedial soil work at the building site. As of 2007, approximately \$16 million of CCDC funds have been spent. An additional \$47 million will be required prior to advertising for continued construction bids. **It is significant to note the \$20 million grant from the state could be recalled should the construction schedule fall behind.**

For \$200 million the City of San Diego will have a library described by some as an architectural landmark that would be recognized worldwide. Others are not so sure. The following is a table that provides a comparison of building dimensions and specifications between the current main library and the proposed new one.

Features	Main library	Proposed Library
Library Space	144,524 square feet	366,094 square feet
Designated Parking	None	250 Underground 250 Discounted private
Collection Size		
Total (Volumes)	780,000	1,250,598
Children's (Volumes)	42,965	71,965
Public Computers	84	336
Special Areas		
Children's Library	3,200 square feet	10,255 square feet
Teen Center	1,240 square feet	3,840 square feet
Readers Seats	409	1,200
Meeting Spaces		
Auditorium Capacity	185 People	350 people
Number of Meeting Rooms	2	6
Number of Study Rooms	None	13
Special Services		
Literacy Services	Off-site at Branch Library	3,892 square feet
Gallery and Exhibit Space	Minimal hallway space	3,000 square feet
Special Event Space	None	4,000 square feet

The proposed new main library as observed in architectural drawings and a model will be nine stories tall with two underground parking levels. Reaching above the structure will be an open trellised dome which will protect the public rooms from sun and wind. From top to bottom, the ninth floor will have a gallery for special events and collections. The eighth floor will have space for art and music, communication with the Serra System (a network of public, academic and special libraries in the southern California counties of Imperial and San Diego) and READS/San Diego, (a voluntary literacy program). Floors six and seven will be reserved for lease as a possible source of income or for future library expansion. History and biography sections as well as library offices will be on the fifth floor. The fourth floor will house literature, language, fiction, an internet center and a computer training/technology demonstration center. The third floor will be reserved for science, magazines and newspapers, patents and trademarks, government documents and social science and business. Teen and homework centers will be located on the second floor. Finally, the ground floor will contain the lobby, popular titles, children's books, conference rooms, auditorium and the "I Can Center," which will provide services for persons with disabilities.

The proposed library's inside/outside dome takes advantage of our mild climate, encourages social interaction and will serve as a cultural center for the entire city. The lighted dome in the evening and the dark of night will be a beacon for all to see and admire. The ground floor is an outdoor room shaded by large trees that will serve as an important gathering space suitable for large events. A pavilion-like outdoor cafe and a 350 seat auditorium are to be included on the ground floor. The entire facade between the auditorium and courtyard can be expanded to increase auditorium capacity. The proposed design includes all the necessities to be the hub of cultural activity.

For many, a fine state of the art library is the essence of a city. It is a cultural characteristic defining a city. Libraries in Seattle, San Jose and Minneapolis have become the focal points of activity. Increase in library visitation in all of these cities has been phenomenal and has added a sense of refinement to each.

FACTS AND FINDINGS

Fact: San Diego's current main library is obsolete.

Finding: The current library was designed to accommodate a population of fewer than 500,000, and to accommodate the electrical, electronic, earthquake, parking and storage requirements of the 1950s. It would be impossible to retrofit the current building to satisfy those requirements for 2007 and beyond.

Fact: A site was selected and funding was set aside to build a new San Diego Main library.

Finding: Following several studies and community inputs a library site was selected at 11th and Park Boulevard

Finding: CCDC provided \$80 million; the library received a grant of \$20 million from the State of California and \$3 million from private donors. The 2005 estimate to build a state of the art library was \$150 million.

Fact: There are conflicting opinions concerning proceeding with the proposed new main library design. There are many who object to the funding arrangements.

Finding: Op-Ed articles and letters to the *San Diego Union-Tribune* refer to the new library design as ugly. According to these, the dome and other trivial design aspects detract from building utility and add to the costs of construction and on-going maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2006-2007 San Diego County Grand Jury recommends that the City of San Diego:

- 07-60:** Consider a bond issue to completely fund the construction of the proposed main library. This would encourage personal loans to keep library construction on track. The loans could be repaid following the passage of the bond. Should the Bond fail, the loans would be considered contributions.

COMMENDATION

The Jury commends the entire San Diego Main library staff for its continued efforts to provide acceptable library services despite multiple shortcomings.

REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

The California Penal Code §933(c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. Such comment shall be made *no later than 90 days* after the Grand Jury publishes its report (filed with the Clerk of the Court); except that in the case of a report containing findings and recommendations pertaining to a department or agency headed by an elected County official (e.g. District Attorney, Sheriff, etc.), such comment shall be made *within 60 days* to the Presiding Judge with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Furthermore, California Penal Code §933.05(a), (b), (c), details, as follows, the manner in which such comment(s) are to be made:

- (a) As to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
 - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding
 - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
 - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for

discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

- (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) If a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with the Penal Code §933.05 are required from the:

<u>Responding Agency</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>Date</u>
Mayor, City of San Diego	07-60	8/21/07